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ABSTRACT

The status of academic women is compared with that of men to determine whether disciminating practices and resulting inequality for women continue to exist. Current scientific periodicals, monographs, and books were searched, and the most recent statistics are presented. Results are discussed in terms of admissions, enrollment and degrees earned, faculty members, college administrators, trustees, salaries, fringe benefits, commencement speakers, financial aid, women's studies, sexual harassment, sports participation, leadership positions, and programs to meet special needs of women students. Findings show recent gains by women in higher education such as increases in enrollment, degrees earned, in women's studies programs, sports participation, and special programs for women. However, discrimination in all of these and other areas continues. Sexual harassment of female students is prevalent. Women faculty are employed in lower teaching levels, and their salaries are less than men's salaries. Recommendations include: (1) further research on academic women at national, state, and regional levels; (2) incentives for change to individuals, departments, and institutions; (3) elimination of institutional policies, practices, rules, and regulation that hinder women's educational progress; (4) new services, such as child care, reentry counseling, and adequate campus security; and (5) frequent review of progress. (CC)

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THE RESPONSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO WOMEN'S INEQUALITY

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INTRODUCTION

> It is a widely held but fallacious belief in the U.S. that any woman can, if she wishes, plan, seek out, be trained for, and maintain a career of her choosing.[1]

> Higher education in the United States was designed exclusively for the white, upper - or - middle-class male. Its procedures, its rigid uninterrupted time-table, and its cost all but prohibit its use by women.[2]

Many changes have occured since these statements were made in 1971. In 1972 Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments Act, making discrimination against women in education illegal. In the last decade educators have written books and given speeches on the subject. Women have brought suits in court, have talked calmly at times and have screamed at other times. Both men and women have become aware of the realities of inequality in higher education. Administrators and faculty claim they are eliminating it both formally and informally.

But what has been the actual response of colleges and universities? Is the situation improving? Has discrimination been eliminated? Or are the words espoused merely what college officials would have us believe?

This paper will show that despite attempts to erase inequality and discrimination towards women in higher education in America, the actual status of academic women remains inferior to that of men.

BACKGROUND

Historically, academic women have faced discrimination in countless ways. For example, female students have been denied admission, discouraged from pursuing studies in "male" areas, deprived of participation in sports, given little if any help in dealing with problems unique to women students, and even sexually manipulated by male teachers. All students have been subjected to sexist curricula and denied the opportunity to study women in American and world

history and in related areas. Female educators have not been hired. When hired, they have been forced to accept part-time work or less desirable assignments, denied tenure, paid low salaries, and passed over for promotions.

METHODOLOGY

In order to discover if these discriminating practices and resulting inequality for women continue to exist, information researched in current, scientific periodicals, monographs, and books will be presented in this paper. An effort has been made to locate the most recent statistics.

FINDINGS

1. ADMISSIONS

Researchers state it is difficult to prove discrimination in admitting students into schools. As recently as 1974 one institution acknowledged that equal percentages of males and females were admitted with verbal SAT scores over 700 while 91% of the males but only 85% of the females with math SAT scores "in the highest range"[3] were admitted. Thus, the author concludes, "the conventional belief in the mathematical superiority of men is neatly substantiated."[4]

Hanson, Cole, and Lamb, stating women in their study were "not being excluded because of objective, quantified qualifications such as test scores and high school grades,"[5] suggested public quotas on women and other more subtle restrictions were likely.[6]

Researchers Clifford and Walster, after discovering "low ability males preferred significantly over low-ability females while high-ability males were not preferred significantly over high-ability females,"[7] concluded that only the most qualified women can succeed.[8]

2. ENROLLMENT AND DEGREES EARNED

In 1960, of college students aged twenty to twenty-four, males outnumbered

females more than two to one.[9] Recently the Census Bureau reported the number of women college students is now higher than that of men for the first time since World War II.[10]

A similar trend is occurring in enrollment in junior colleges. In 1965 the number of women was 59% that of men. The number of women gradually grew until by 1977 the number of women surpassed the number of men.[11]

A study recently prepared for the U.S. Office of Education disclosed that women continue to be discouraged from taking vocational courses which could lead to higher paying jobs.[12] Though the number of associate degrees has increased for women from the years 1971 to 1977 in all fields except for health services and nursing, the female percentages in the traditionally "male fields" are low for 1977: mechanical and engineering - 3.9%, natural science 33.6%, data processing 42.5%, public service 39.9%, and police and corrections 16.9%.[13]

The number of women earning Bachelor's degrees has been increasing during the last decade while the number of degrees for men has started to decline.[14] Though more women are now entering traditinally "male" areas of studies, the percentages of Bachelor's degrees earned by females in these fields in 1977 was still low: agriculture 22.3%, forestry 11.1%, architecture 21.7%, biological sciences 36.2%, accounting 23.4%, computers and information sciences 23.4%, engineering 4.5%, mathematics 41.5%, military science 0%, physical sciences 20.0%, general chemistry 23.4%, physics 11.8%, geology 21.6%, and theology 26.2%.[15]

In October, 1978, 9% of American males were enrolled in college (at all levels) as compared to 8.2% of American females.[16] In 1978, Bonnie Freeman quoted an estimate that "from 75 - 90% (depending on the study) of the well-qualified students who do not go to college are women."[17] Moreover, women drop out of college after one of more years at a higher rate than men do.[18]

Women are increasingly entering medical schools. Whereas 9.1% of first year medical students were women in 1969, by 1978 they were 25.2%.[19]

But, while noting the increase in female medical students and the end of blatant sex discrimination in recruitment and admissions, one author warns it is more difficult to get rid of discrimination in areas such as "inclusions and omissions in curricula, textbooks, and faculty-student interactions."[20]

3. FACULTY MEMBERS, COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS, AND TRUSTEES

A. FACULTY MEMBERS

Many studies report statistics similar to the following: In the nine State University System campuses in Florida, about 25% of the present faculty are women yet only 12% of the tenured faculty are women. 45% of non-tenured faculty and 33% of part-time faculty hired during the past three years are women. 65% of female faculty are either part-time, non-tenured, or both. 50% of all dismissals, resignations, and retirement of the last three years were women. The number of male professors increased in the last five years by 26% while that of female professors decreased by 2%.[21]

B. COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS

Every study reviewed reports the scarcity of women in administrative positions. For example, a recent study examined by Suzanne Howard indiciated that women averaged 15.8% of the top 52 administrative positions in each of 1,100 responding institutions.[22]

C. TRUSTEES

An American Association of University Women (AAUW) study found 21% of the trustees of schools surveyed were women. "Only 35% of the women's colleges have appointed women to at least half of their trustee positions."[23]

4. SALARIES AND FRINGE BENEFITS OF FACULTY

In the Florida campuses referred to earlier, average women faculty salaries are lower than those of men. Of faculty earning $25,000 or more in 1978, less than 7% were women while of those earning $13,000 - $15,999, 36% were women. The modal salary range for the faculty in 1978-79 was $6,000 more for men than women.[24]

According to the AAUW survey, although schools increasingly give child-bearing leave, fringe benefits during such leave declined by 10% from 1970 to 1976.[25]

November 1, 1980 is the deadline for settling a suit in which women faculty retirees claim retirement funds violate equal pay and anti-sex-discrimination laws by paying women lower monthly benefits than men because women on the average live longer.[26]

5. COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS

In a study of 485 schools, 41% responded that they had had no female commencement speaker during 1973 - 1976.[27]

6. FINANCIAL AID

In 1976 women received .6% of all U.S. private foundation grants.[28] Book reviewer Patricia Graham describes the independent woman researcher as "caught in a vicious cycle of always searching for new funds with no time or energy to complete the last project adequately, thus losing her reputation for effectiveness, efficiency, and timeliness."[29]

7. WOMEN'S STUDIES

From 1974 to 1979, Women's Studies programs have tripled[30] so that now over 325 institutions offer them.[31] Even at colleges where overall enrollment is declining, such programs are growing, such as at San Francisco State.[32]

Last year Denison University began to require students to take at least one course "concerned with the effects and causes of discrimination."[33] This could be one of several courses in ethnic or women's studies. However feminists warn much work is needed in transforming male-centered curricula in individual departments to include women.[34]

8. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment of female students by male faculty is a recently publicized

long kept secret. In a report presented at a recent sociologists' meeting, two researchers at the University of California at Berkeley found 30% of female seniors "had been harassed by at least one male instructor while at Berkeley or at a previous school."[35]

In an informal poll at a California college, 25% of the faculty said they had been "sexually active with students," and another 25% admitted they would like to be. 10% of American women with psychology degrees said they had had sexual contact with their teachers. For women who obtained psychology degrees in the last six years, the percent is 25%.[36]

In an earlier study 17% of women with doctorates in psychology reported having sexual contact with their teachers. The women reacted with anger and humiliation, "felt harassed and anxious," and told of "threats that their dissertations would be held up if they did not cooperate or that they might have trouble getting good recommendations."[37]

Because of pressure from female psychologists, the American Psychological Association revised its code of ethics in 1979 to consider it unethical for psychotherapists to have sexual relations with patients or clients (which include student trainees.)[38]

Through suits, formation of women's groups, public protests, and individual women speaking out against sexual harassment, some men are receiving punishment in the form of losing their jobs, being suspended without pay, and/or being publicly embarrassed.

A February 4, 1980 Time article mentions a "hundred or so complaints received by a Government council monitoring sexual harassment on campus."[39]

The Congress-established National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs will soon issue a report which concludes "Sexual harassment of post-secondary students is an increasingly visible problem of great, but as yet unascertained, dimensions."[40]

9.SPORTS PARTICIPATION

Though 30% of College athletes are now females ("an increase in ten years of 250%"),[41] complaints are being voiced. For example, eight female athletes filed a class action suit on behalf of 150 Temple University women who participate in intercollegiate sports, saying the school violated federal laws which prohibit sex discrimination. The alleged inequities include:

1. Men's athletic scholarships for 1979-1980 equaled over $700,000 while women's were $188,000.

2. During the 1977-78 academic year, 42% of university intercollegiate athletes were women, but their program received 13% of total funds.

3. Without counting football, the men's budget was more than 3.5 times that of women's.

4. The women's gymnastics team must use "bars in poor repair and worn-out mats, both of which create unsafe conditions not faced by the men's gymnastic team."

5. Women track athletes have been issued no new uniforms in three years.

6. During bad weather in the spring of 1980, the football team forced the women's softball team off their indoor practice area.

7. Though women must wash their own uniforms, the university provides free laundry service for men.

8. While travelling, women are usually housed three or four to a room with two to a bed; men are two to a room and one to a bed.[42]

10. LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Except for yearbook editors, the percentage of women in campus leadership positions increased only slightly from 1970 - 76 in one study. Women who held positions usually had the less prestigious ones not voted on by students, such as newspaper editor. Leadership opportunities for women increased most at smaller schools and private institutions.[43]

11. PROGRAMS ATTEMPTING TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS OF WOMEN STUDENTS

Despite the increasing occurrences of special workshops, conferences (such as one by the National Science Foundation)[44], and other programs which try to meet special needs of females, researchers have uncovered many areas that are neglected.

68% of schools in one survey had no Association for Women Students or similar organizations "to represent the special interests of women students on campus." This represented a "marked decline" since 1970.[45] Two-thirds of the schools questioned had no separate administrative position or office for coordinating women's affairs. 75% had no women's center.[46]

Hooper and March, having worked in a college counseling center, suggest that institutions have virtually ignored the special problems of female single parents.[47]

About one half of over 450 schools surveyed provided no gynecological information or feminist counseling ("counseling services by female professionals who have had special training in sex role stereotyping.")[48]

According to the AAUW study, there were "slight decreases in the percentage of institutions allowing pregnant students to attend classes and married women to live in residence halls without their spouses."[49]

In a study to determine which, if any obstacles interfere with female students' progress through school, the authors found one problem which was not often mentioned by researchers - personal safety:

> Women, compared with men, were clearly inhibited in their mobility and in their use of campus facilities at night. Such an obstacle could have the effect of interfering with a woman student's progress through school, especially when one considers the need to use library, laboratory, computer, or other campus facilites; competition with other students for use of those facilities; and the occasional (or frequent) need to do schoolwork in the academic rather than home environment (for example, the need to study in the library rather than in a noisy home or residence hall.)[50]

SUMMARY

The principle findings in this paper support the thesis proposed. Information presented has shown recent gains by women in higher education, such as increases in enrollment, in degrees earned, in Women's Studies programs, in sports participation, and in special programs for women. However, evidence of discrimination in all of these and other areas continues. Sexual harassment of female students is prevalent. Women faculty are employed in lower teaching levels, and their salaries are less than men's.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can be done to end this injustice? Since the many specific recommendations suggested by the authors listed in the bibliography cannot be detailed here, some general recommendations follow. Gappa and Uehling suggest five steps which schools should take: 1. Furthur research academic women at national, state, and regional levels. 2. Provide incentives for change to individuals, departments, and institutions. 3. Eliminate institutional policies, practices, rules, and regulations that hinder women's educational progress. 4. Provide new services, such as child care, reentry counseling, and adequate campus security. 5. Continuously review progress made, and undertake any actions needed.[51]

Though many researchers warn discrimination against women will not end voluntarily, others, such as Phyllis Stock, conclude their studies with optimism:

> Women's education, like all education, corresponds to the needs of society - as viewed by the people (usually men) who live in it. Women's education will come into full flower when it is realized that a society benefits by developing the capabilities of all its members. Women's status will be equal with men's when society is so structured as to make use of all those capabilities.[52]

FOOTNOTES

[1]Audrey C. Cohen, "Women and Higher Education: Recommendations for Change," PHI DELTA KAPPAN, LIII (November, 1971), p. 164.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Elga Wasserman, et. al., ed. WOMEN IN ACADEMIA; EVOLVING POLICIES TOWARD EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (Praeger Publishers, 1975), p.10.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Gary R. Hanson, Nancy S. Cole, and Richard R. Lamb, "Sex Bias in Selective College Admissions," in Janice Pottker and Andrew Fishel, SEX BIAS IN THE SCHOOLS: THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE (Associated University Presses, 1977), p. 352.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Margaret M. Clifford and Elaine Walster, "The Effect of Sex on College Admission, Work, Evaluation, and Job Interviews," in Janice Pottker and Andrew Fishel, SEX BIAS IN THE SCHOOLS: THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE (Associated University Presses, 1977), p. 331.

[8]Ibid.

[9]U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES; 1978. 99th ed., p. 160.

[10]"Women Outnumber Men in College," THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR, August 24, 1980, Section 1, p. 21.

[11]U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES; 1979. 100th ed., p. 161.

[12]"Vocational Courses Discouraged," NEW WOMEN'S TIMES, VI,15 (July 18 - August 28, 1980), p. 2.

[13]U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES; 1979, p.170.

[14]Ibid., p. 159

[15]Ibid., p. 169.

[16]Ibid., p. 142.

[17]Bonnie Cook Freeman, "Female Education in Patriarchal Power Systems," in Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly, EDUCATION AND COLONIALISM (Longman, Inc., 1978), p. 222.

[18]U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES; 1979, p. 145.

[19]Mary Rath Walsh, "The Rediscovery of the Need for a Feminist Medical Education," HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW, XLIX, 4 (November, 1979), p. 447.

[20]Ibid., p. 455.

[21]"Faculty Union Charges Sex Discrimination," NATIONAL NOW TIMES, XIII, 6 (June, 1980), p. 14

[22]Suzanne Howard, BUT WE WILL PERSIST: A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN ACADEME, (American Association of University Women, 1978), p. 46.

[23]Ibid., p. 6.

[24]"Faculty Union Charges Sex Discrimination," p. 14.

[25]Suzanne Howard, p. 7.

[26]Cheryl M. Fields, "Federal Judge May Enter Pension Talks on Equal Payments to Men and Women," CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, XX, 20 (July 14, 1980), p. 7.

[27]Suzanne Howard, p. 4.

[28]Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Financial Support of Women's Programs in the 1970's," HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW, L (February, 1980), p. 102.

[29]Ibid., 104.

[30]Florence Howe, "Introduction: the First Decade of Women's Studies, HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW, XLIX, 4 (November, 1979), p. 416.

[31]Janet Hook, "Women's Studies Win Growing Support in Fight for Academic Legitimacy," THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, XXI, 3 (September 8, 1980), p. 3.

[32]Judith M. Gappa and Barbara S. Uehling, WOMEN IN ACADEME: STEPS TO GREATER EQUALITY, (American Association for Higher Education/ERIC Clearinghouse on HAgher Education, 1979), p. 36.

[33]Janet Hook, p.3.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Lorenzo Middleton, "Sexual Harassment by Professors: an 'Increasingly Visible' Problem" CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, XXI, 4 (September 15, 1980), p. 5.

[36]"Fighting Lechery on Campus," TIME (February 4, 1980), p.84.

[37]"One-Fourth of Women Psychologists in Survey Report Sexual Contacts with Their Professors," CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, (September 17, 1979), p.10.

[38]Ibid.

[39]"Fighting Lechery on Campus," p. 84.

[40]Lorenzo Middleton, p. 1.

[41]P.S. Wood, "Female Athletes: They've Come a Long Way, Baby," READER'S DIGEST, CXVII, 702 (October, 1980), p. 126.

[42]Lorenzo Middleton, "Female Athletes Sue Temple University, CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, XX, 8 (April 21, 1980), p. 12

[43]Suzanne Howard, p. 4.

[44]Anne C. Roark, "Women in Science: Unequal Pay, Unsold Ideas, and Sometimes, Unhappy Marriages," CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, XX, 8 (April 21, 1980), p. 3.

[45]Suzanne Howard, p. 4.

[46]Ibid.

[47]J.O. Hooper and G. B. March, "The Female Single Parent in the University," JOURNAL OF COLLEGE STUDENT PERSONNEL, (March, 1980), p. 144 - 145.

[48]Suzanne Howard, p. 5.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Lynn P. Fisher, Thomas R. McCanne, and Lou Ann Keating, "The Impact of Academic Environment and Student Services on the Academic Progress of Women," JOURNAL OF COLLEGE STUDENT PERSONNEL (January, 1980), p. 78.

[51]Judith M. Gappa and Barbara S. Uehling, p. 73-79.

[52]Phyllis Stock, BETTER THAN RUBIES; A HISTORY OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION. (Capricorn Books, 1978), p. 231.

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